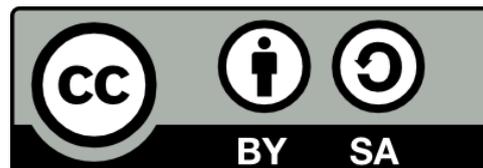




MAKING SENSE

Laura Ashton and Sheree Veysey



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Duration –10 Mins

Genre – Comedy/ Sci-Fi

Tags/Themes - body image, eating disorder, eating difficulties, society and norms, worldview, money, social exclusion, stigma and discrimination

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Making Sense

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Title – Making Sense

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Synopsis - Students are studying an alien culture and finding it hard going! These 'humans' just don't make a lot of sense — why do seemingly intelligent beings restrict their food intake and do such bizarre things to their bodies?

Discussion points for study – Why do you think the writers have used 'aliens' in this script? How does looking at our society through an alien's eyes make us think about our culture, beliefs and behaviours? What are the main themes this script is trying to teach us? How might you support a healthier body image at your school or amongst your friends?

Cast/ Characters

STUDENT 1 – *Any gender, any size or shape – youth, school or university aged*

STUDENT 2 – *as above*

STUDENT 3 – *Mature aged/ wiser. Sounds more experienced than the others.*

(Wardrobe suggestion – as 'alien-like' as possible. Be creative with costuming – they should not look 'human'.)

Setting – See below — an alien student's room/study hall/space-ship.

Props – A 'tablet' of some kind that the students refer to.

Notes to Director – *The authors are happy for this script to be further workshoped in order to improve its impact. Actor diversity is encouraged. The Director is welcome to play with the theme of aliens (for example using bizzare, strange or minimalist costumes).*

A staging idea from the authors: Dress the actors in all black with white/fluro tape used on certain parts of their body. The actors are then lit by ultra violet light, so the white then suggests quite strange alien beings of weird shapes, and the skill required from the actors is then closer to a radio-play. A screen upon which relevant slides are projected is at the other side of the stage. Slides illustrate items like reality television, diet ads and plastic surgery as mentioned in the script.

Making Sense - BEGIN

Stage directions: *Two aliens are seated to the side of the stage, where they are studying for a test. There is a projection screen in the centre of the stage.*

Student 1: This information does not sit well with my binary streams. It just makes no sense.

Student 2: I know.

Student 1: I hate this subject. When this cycle is finished I refuse to look at another intergalactic history book ever again!

Student 2: Okay, but the exam is only a few suns away. We need to concentrate. Let's start with what we do understand.

Student 1: Alright. These creatures ...

Student 2: Practice saying 'humans'. It's what they called themselves, and you'll get more marks. Humans loved to organise themselves into boxes.

Student 1: Reductionist.

Student 2: I know.

Student 1: So these creatures ...

Student 2: Humans ...

Student 1: ... would sort themselves into nations, ethnicities, cultures, and races, basically all the same things ...

Student 3: Correction. Technically human ethnicity and culture often relate to nationhood and are closely intertwined. At the same time human nations can have many different ethnicities and many different cultures. Race became an inadequate concept to describe the genetic diversity of the human civilisation.

Student 1: Confusing.

Student 3: Humans had an implicit need to categorise themselves. Classes, castes, personality types, genders ...

Student 1: Didn't they used to think that everyone had to be an A or a B?

Student 2: As were supposedly the opposite of Bs. The books tell us that As at birth are only dressed in one colour in case other humans thought As were actually Bs.

Students 1: Bizarre. These categorisations are very confusing, and when we consider human's ingestion habits in Post1950 AD Western Earth, it gets really unintelligible.

- Student 2:** You must be missing something. All the evidence suggests these were intelligent life forms.
- Student 1:** Did you not examine the time capsules we were assigned in class?
- Student 2:** Ah yes, the time capsules with the 'tele-vision'. Specifically 'reality tele-vision'. Let me modify...Some of the evidence suggests these were quite intelligent life forms...albeit life forms that needed to ingest certain amounts of biomatter and H₂O in order to survive and replicate
- Student 1:** And yet it seems they were obsessed with the restriction of biomatter. Food they termed it.
- Student 2:** Picture their genetic material.
- Student 1:** Quite Primitive.
- Student 2:** It depends on whose you compare it to; not all species have triple helixes like us! Their primitive DNA, combined with their food ingestion habits resulted in the huge range of shapes and sizes that humans came in.
- Student 1:** That's what makes it so strange. They needed food, they enjoyed food, yet ...
- Student 2:** In the absence of being able to levitate or body shift, it was a primary sensory pleasure!
- Student 1:** Still, it's just mad that they strived to reach a uniform size. Some constantly tried to consume less than what their bodies wanted ...
- Student 2:** And so their bodies reacted!
- Student 1:** Predictable.
- Student 2:** Their brains were deprived of food, they became obsessed with it. They found themselves caught in cycles of obsession, unable to think of anything but food, food, size, food ...
- Student 1:** These humans sure put a lot of weight on the size of their bodies.
- Student 2:** In the end, Humans blamed themselves for their obsession. The books also tell us that some humans would bring in experts from their communities to fix them. These fixers would then diagnose them as ill and prescribe different types of food ingestion programmes to remedy their shapes and sizes!
- Student 1:** They constantly judged each others' bodies as if there was a right way to look. They promoted ideals of the human body, a perfect product only genetically achievable for a small proportion of them. I just can't get the logic of their food ingestion patterns. These were supposed to be intelligent creatures.
- Student 2:** *correcting Student 1 for using the word creatures*) Humans!
- Student 1:** ...right? Their attitudes towards food and their bodies made no sense. How will I explain it to the examiner when I don't understand it myself?

- Student 3:** You are looking at this all wrong. Stop thinking about logic or sense. Stop thinking about humans doing things for their health, general wellbeing, spirituality, customs or for enjoyment. Think about one thing only, and it will all make sense.
- Student 2:** Well?
- Student 3:** Marketing.
- Student 1:** Mar-Quet-Ting?
- Student 3:** The human action of promoting and selling products or services, practised by special humans know as marketers, to gain more of the property commonly known as money.
- Student 2:** Money. They thought it was quite important, didn't they?
- Student 3:** So important that eventually, it seemed as though money was what made the Earth go round.
- Student 1:** Wow.
- Student 2:** But what's this money got to do with their food ingestion habits?
- Student 3:** As money made the Earth go round, the entire civilisation wanted more and more of it. Marketing created various need ... needs humans would then spend money to meet.
- Student 1:** Incredible.
- Student 3:** What made it ingenious was that the need was imaginary! Humans tricked each other that they needed X, Y, Z... large dwelling places, expensive underwear, flavoured H2O ... when in reality they didn't. In the case of food and body image, these marketers discovered that the wider the gap between constructs and reality, the more effective the marketing was! Even after research proved that food ingestion programmes were ineffective, marketers grew bolder and these programmes kept proliferating. More money was spent on food ingestion programmes than on human welfare.
- Student 1:** What was this money stuff like? It must have been irresistible to have all of humankind distorting reality to get it?
- Student 3:** It was originally objects, then bits of paper, then just numbers.
- Student 2:** Just numbers?
- Student 3:** Just numbers, binary eventually.
- Student 2:** What a ridiculous thing to organise a whole species around.
- Student 1:** So this is why humans were obsessed with their bodies and what they consumed.

- Student 3:** Exactly. There was more money to be made when humans were dissatisfied with their bodies than there was in encouraging them to be happy.
- Student 2:** Made possible by the marketing of these programmes.
- Student 3:** All sorts of programmes. 'Gym memberships', 'exercise equipment', 'Food products', 'control garments', 'cellulite creams', 'self-help' books, 'fat burning supplements', 'music building supplements', 'plastic surgery'...
- Student 1&2:** They did surgery on plastic!?
- Student 3:** No that's what they called it, the surgical modification of their bodies for the purposes of appearing more like each other.
- Student 1:** This society is beginning to sound rather...emotionally depressing.
- Student 3:** There were trillions of humans not feeling good about themselves. In marketing unrealistic bodies, the marketers had created the perfect product for sale, because no human had or could have one. Yet the entire civilisation was being told that they could have it if they just tried harder, just sacrificed more. Everybody was encouraged to pick at themselves and each other to point out the ways in which their unique, genetically diverse bodies, were just not good enough.
- Student 2:** (*Muses*) All of them believing their bodies weren't good enough. Why...I notice some emotional feelings of sadness!
- Student 1:** Sad or not, we are now likely to surpass all expectations in this exam
- Student 2:** (*Continues to muse*) It is interesting how things make sense once you factor this money thing in...
- Student 1:** Yes. These humans were not so unintelligent...they were just, perhaps...
- Student 3:** I think the word you're looking for is deceived.

Making Sense - END